POSTMODERN ETHICS

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Course Description
This course is an introduction to some of the various ways that the pursuit of an ethical life, a life lived well in the light of goodness and justice, has been inspired by “post-modernism.” For our purposes, that means ethics pursued after the challenges posed to the autonomy of the subject and the absolute power of reason, challenges that become dominant in western thinking since the mid Twentieth Century. In particular, this means thinking about justice and goodness outside of the exclusive concern with rule-based ethics (Deontology and Utilitarianism) that marks the Enlightenment, or High Modernism. This is why we will use the provisional title Post-Modern Ethics, but as we will see this name is ambiguous, for it is not clear to what degree these thinkers are merely a development of Modernism, and it is not clear if there is indeed something coherent about what could come “after” modernism

Course Structure
I am open to considerable student input on what to include in the course. This is one possible structure that we will discuss at our first meeting.

I. Liberal Post-modernism:
   1. Ethics of Alterity
      --Emmanuel Levinas

II. Radical Post-modernism:
   2. Communitarian Ethics (Community/ Tradition)
      --Charles Taylor
   3. Critical Ethics (Genealogy/ Ideology)
      --Georg Lukacs
   4. Sacramental Ethics
      --Richard Kearney

III. Some Applications
   5. Poverty/ Environment/ Food/ Consumption/ Sex
      --Enrique Dussel

Required Texts:
Further Reading:

**Ethics of Alterity**
John Caputo (ed.): *God, the Gift and Postmodernism*; Derrida: *Gift of Death*; Jean-Luc Marion: *The Erotic Phenomenon*; Ricoeur: *Oneself as Another*;

**Communitarian Ethics**

**Critical Ethics**
Marx: *German Ideology*; Horkheimer and Adorno: *Dialectic of Enlightenment*; Fredrick Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*; Marcuse: *One Dimensional Man*;

**Sacramental Ethics**

**Narrative Ethics**
Richard Kearney: *Wake of Imagination*; Ricoeur: *Time and Narrative*;

**Liberation Ethics**
Gustavo Gutierrez: *A Theology of Liberation*; Jon Sobrino: *Jesus the Liberator*; Leonardo Boff: *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*; Leo VIII: *Rerum Novarum*; John Paul II: *Laborem Exercens*.

Reading Schedule:

Class 1. Levinas: *Totality and Infinity*. (1, “The Same and the Other” and 3, “Exteriority and the Face”).
Film: *La Promesse*, Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne. 1996

Class 2. Charles Taylor: *Sources of the Self*.
Film: *La Grande Séduction*, Jean-François Pouliot. 2003

Film: *Up in the Air*, Jason Reitman. 2009

Class 4. Richard Kearney: *Anatheism*
Film: *Babbette’s Feast*, Gabriel Axel. 1987

Film: *The Mission*, Roland Joffé
**Grading:**
Students will make one 10-20 minute presentation to the class in the area of his or choice (ungraded). Students will turn in one 10-20 page (3200-6500 word) paper at the end of the semester (May 5th). Details forthcoming.